

# 2015 Scripps Howard Award winners announced

March 8, 2016

**CINCINNATI** – The winners of the 2015 Scripps Howard Awards revealed foster care horrors, uncovered a wrongful imprisonment in New Orleans, tracked the origin and relentless path of the Ebola virus and exposed dental care dangers in Arizona. The Scripps Howard Foundation is proud to announce the winners and finalists of its annual journalism awards, honoring the best work in the news industry and journalism education.

Established in 1953, the Scripps Howard Foundation's national journalism competition is open to news organizations based in the United States and recognizes outstanding print, broadcast and online journalism in 15 categories. Two additional categories honor college journalism and mass communication educators for excellence in administration and teaching.

Winners receive trophies and share \$180,000 in cash prizes.

Recipients of the journalism awards will be honored in Scottsdale, Arizona, on April 28. Event co-hosts are the Scripps Howard Foundation; its corporate founder, The E.W. Scripps Company; and KNXV, the Scripps ABC affiliate in Phoenix.

Recipients of the education awards will be honored in cooperation with the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC) during the keynote session of its annual conference, to be held in August in Minneapolis.

"Journalism is alive and well and making a tremendous impact on people's lives. We can certainly say that with confidence after reviewing all of the outstanding entries and deciding on the winners this year," said Liz Carter, president and CEO of the Scripps Howard Foundation. "The commitment to excellence in their craft exhibited by these professionals is overwhelming and inspiring."

Entries in the journalism categories were judged by industry experts who assembled for two days at the Poynter Institute in St. Petersburg, Florida. Each category was assigned a separate panel of judges, and their decisions are final.

Winners and finalists learned of their selection today, through social media posts on Twitter @SH\_Awards. Receiving 2015 Scripps Howard Awards and finalist recognition are the following media outlets and journalists:

## **INVESTIGATIVE REPORTING**

Aram Roston and Jeremy Singer-Vine with BuzzFeed News receive the Ursula and Gilbert Farfel Prize for Investigative Reporting and \$20,000 for "Fostering Profits," an investigation that identified deaths, sex abuse, and blunders in screening, training and overseeing foster parents at the nation's largest for-profit foster care company.

**JUDGES' COMMENTS:** "This powerful piece sheds light on a for-profit foster care system too few of us were aware of. BuzzFeed, an outlet known for listicles, has mastered how to write investigative prose built for the mobile reader. We salute this story as an example of what the very best audience-centric media outlets can bring to our profession and to our democracy."

Finalists: The staff of The Washington Post for "Fatal Shootings," a year-long project to document every shooting death at the hands of police in 2015 that revealed troubling patterns in the circumstances that led to such shootings and the characteristics of the victims; also, Jenn Abelson, Jonathan Saltzman, Liz Kowalczyk and Scott Allen of The Boston Globe for "Clash in the Name of Care" a package that examined whether it is safe for surgeons to run two operations at once.

The Ursula and Gilbert Farfel Prize is co-sponsored by the Scripps Howard Foundation and the Scripps College of Communication at Ohio University.

### **PUBLIC SERVICE REPORTING**

Alison Young, Nick Penzenstadler, Tom Vanden Brook and others from the USA Today Network receive the Roy W. Howard Award for Public Service Reporting and \$10,000 for "Biolabs in Your Backyard," an investigation that found more than 200 "high containment" laboratories across the United States working with dangerous bacteria, viruses and toxins that require special biosafety level 3 and level 4 precautions to prevent their release. The USA Today investigation also examined safety records, including lapses that have put scientists, lab workers and the public at risk with little public scrutiny.

**JUDGES' COMMENTS:** "This series draws power from its precision reporting about lab mistakes and near miss incidents that put scientists and the public at risk. It would not be an overstatement to say that the pressure for reform from USA Today's reporting has significantly reduced the possibility of a public health catastrophe."

Finalists: Judges for this category selected as finalists Christopher Weaver, Anna Wilde Mathews, Tom McGinty and The Wall Street Journal staff for "Calculated Care," an investigation into the hidden ways financial incentives shape the care patients receive in nursing homes; also, Ian Urbina of The New York Times for "Outlaw Ocean," which revealed that crime and violence in international waters often go unpunished.

### **DISTINGUISHED SERVICE TO THE FIRST AMENDMENT**

Todd Wallack of The Boston Globe receives the Edward Willis Scripps Award for Distinguished Service to the First Amendment and \$10,000 for pushing to get public records opened in Massachusetts.

**JUDGES' COMMENTS:** "Two hundred and forty years after Massachusetts was the cradle of our American Revolution, The Boston Globe began another revolution – to open up the public records of a state that lags far behind virtually every other state in the union in terms of openness."

Finalists: Mike Finger and John Tedesco of the San Antonio Express-News for "Turning Burnt Orange into Gold," the product of a battle to gain access to records which provided insight into the growing role of sponsorships in athletics at the University of Texas at Austin; also, Bryan

Lowry of the Wichita Eagle for exposing a loophole in the Kansas Open Records Act that exempts private emails from disclosure. The investigation revealed widespread use of private emails to conduct public business in the state government.

### **HUMAN INTEREST STORYTELLING**

N. R. Kleinfield of The New York Times receives the Ernie Pyle Award for Human Interest Storytelling and \$10,000 for “Dying Alone,” a story that examined the life of a man who died alone in his apartment.

**JUDGES’ COMMENTS:** “The writing was beautiful and powerful and economical. The writer took a topic that is on many levels mundane. People do not think about it: a death in New York City. It was stunning to see all of the intricacies that go into finding out if there are friends and relatives, and dealing with property and estate issues. It was an amazing piece of work. It was unbelievable reporting over a long period of time.”

Finalists: Lara Logan, Alan B. Goldberg, Robert Zimet and Lani Levine of 60 Minutes for “Hidden Holocaust,” the story of a priest who is determined to find forgotten victims of the Holocaust whose bodies lie in mass unmarked graves in the former USSR; also, Margie Mason of The Associated Press for “22 Years a Slave,” the story of a Myanmar man’s homecoming after spending two decades in slavery in Southeast Asia.

### **BREAKING NEWS**

The staff of The Post and Courier of Charleston, South Carolina, wins the Scripps Howard Award for Breaking News and \$10,000 for its coverage of the killing of nine people at Emanuel AME Church.

**JUDGES’ COMMENTS:** “The Post and Courier’s detailed reporting, brilliant writing and stunning visuals of the murders at Charleston’s historic black church, all on deadline, was a remarkable endeavor that served well an entire community, indeed an entire country. The paper’s editor noted in the accompanying letter that it had decided from the beginning “to keep our focus on the community – its pain, unity and resilience. Indeed, it did. The daily nuanced packages made certain that its readers understood the long troubled history of race relations in South Carolina. But it also poignantly captured the resiliency of a congregation, an entire community that refused to hate. Their response captured an entire nation. With headlines like “The Unspeakable Happened in Our City,” and “Hate Won’t Win,” the paper was making it quite clear that they were not just writing about the community, they are of the community. The paper, for example, produced a remembrance wrap around a Sunday edition the featured a bouquet of nine roses, one for each of the nine victims in the Emanuel AME Church massacre.”

### **DIGITAL INNOVATION**

Stephen Stirling of NJ Advance Media wins the Scripps Howard Award for Digital Innovation and \$10,000 for “Herointown,” which used quantitative and qualitative data to reveal the scope of New Jersey’s heroin problem. The project uses data to metaphorically imagine what a city would be like if it was made up of the state’s heroin users.

**JUDGES’ COMMENTS:** “The winning team at NJ Advanced Media found a new way to tell the story of a national epidemic ravaging their state. What would happen if everyone who was addicted to heroin lived in one place? “Herointown” would be the state’s 4th largest city,

populated by our neighbors, family members, doctors, lawyers — and defying the stereotype of a junky on the street corner. This innovative approach, as effective on mobile media as it was on the desktop, used multiple data sources to illustrate the human cost of the heroin use in New Jersey. The project began with a call for “heroin stories,” and more than 500 citizens from 215 towns — ages 17 to 79 — did just that. The result was a spike in readership and reaction in what has become a living project.”

Finalists: The Wall Street Journal staff for 2050 Demographics, a multimedia series that helps readers envision how we will work, age and live in the future; also, the staff of The Associated Press for “Seeking Home: Life Inside the Calais Migrant Camp.”

### **TELEVISION/CABLE IN-DEPTH LOCAL COVERAGE**

KNXV in Phoenix is the winner of the Jack R. Howard Award for Television/Cable In-Depth Local Coverage and \$10,000. The station’s investigation, “Arizona’s Dental Dangers,” found that numerous dentists had been disciplined for bad behavior without the public knowing. The station fought a legal battle to get access to records. As a result of this work, the state has changed its regulations, and background checks are required for licensing. KNXV is a Scripps-owned station.

**JUDGES’ COMMENTS:** “The station compiled a list of every dentist who had been disciplined in Arizona for the last five years and posted the cases on a single searchable website, something the state would not do. The station poured money and airtime into telling a story that, no doubt, would have gone unexplored if not for these journalists.”

Finalists: KUSA-TV in Denver is recognized for “Fueling the Fire,” an investigation into the role helicopter fuel systems played in fiery, deadly crashes; also, KNBC in Los Angeles is recognized for “LA’s Nuclear Secret,” a yearlong investigation that revealed that dangerous radioactive materials are being stored at the Santa Susana Field Laboratory, unbeknownst to the families who have been living nearby.”

### **TELEVISION/CABLE IN-DEPTH NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL COVERAGE**

Dan Edge of PBS Frontline-WGBH receives the Jack R. Howard Award for Television/Cable In-Depth National and International Coverage and \$10,000 for “Outbreak.” It is the inside story of how the Ebola outbreak began, and why it wasn’t stopped before it was too late. Edge spent months on the ground in West Africa, tracing the outbreak’s path through Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia, uncovering the hidden story of what happened.

**JUDGES’ COMMENTS:** “Outbreak takes a deep and measured examination of the very beginnings of this crisis to uncover how it spread and what would have, even should have, prevented it. From political posturing to slow response from the World Health Organization, the story makes it clear that 10,000 people didn’t have to die.”

Finalists: Bernice Yeung and Daffodil Altan of Reveal from the Center for Investigative Reporting and Andres Cediell of the Investigative Reporting Program are recognized for “Rape on the Night Shift” which spotlights the dangers facing immigrant women, often undocumented, who work at night as janitors; also, Anderson Copper, Katherine Davis, Sam Hornblower and Terry Manning of CBS News’ 60 Minutes are recognized for “Lumber Liquidators,” an

investigation that found that Lumber Liquidators' Chinese-made laminate flooring contains amounts of toxic formaldehyde that may not meet health and safety standards.

### **RADIO IN-DEPTH COVERAGE**

Aleem Maqbool of BBC News receives the Jack R. Howard Award for In-Depth Radio Coverage and \$10,000 for "Robert Jones: Free at Last?" the story of a man who spent 23 years wrongly jailed for a murderous crime spree.

**JUDGES' COMMENTS:** "This piece represents in-depth reporting at its best and most moving. Using a single, enormous injustice, the story reveals systemic problems within the New Orleans criminal justice system, as well as systemic indifference to its human consequences. Reporter Aleem Maqbool doggedly pursued everyone who contributed to the wrongful incarceration of Robert Jones, whose trial and conviction defied both logic and fact. His tape is riveting, rich with scenes of compelling drama. Not only an example of superior reporting, Maqbool's work had real-world impact – it helped to rescue an innocent man from a lifetime behind bars."

Finalists: Jack Rodolico and Laura Starecheski of Reveal from the Center for Investigative Reporting for "A Mountain of Misconduct," which dug into the world of corruption inside niche health care facilities for people with neurological disabilities; also, the staff of Southern California Public Radio for "Officer-Involved: A KPCC Investigation," which used data to explore the story behind police shootings in Los Angeles.

### **COMMUNITY JOURNALISM**

The staff of The Post and Courier in Charleston, South Carolina receives the Scripps Howard Award for Community Journalism and \$10,000 for "Shots Fired," an in-depth analysis of every police shooting in South Carolina since 2009 that revealed the state's failure to learn and properly investigate shooting cases.

**JUDGES' COMMENTS:** "We applaud the exhaustive research, including scouring more than 30,000 documents, hours of video and an analysis of more than 400,000 stops involving law enforcement officials in South Carolina. The reporting and writing were compelling, as was the chilling video. The project has created a positive chain of reaction. It has forced local, state and federal law enforcement officials to re-evaluate how they investigate and respond to shootings."

Finalist: The staff of The Post and Courier in Charleston, South Carolina, and Rachel Baye, Ben Wieder and Kytja Weir from the Center for Public Integrity, co-reported and co-published "Capitol Gains," which spotlighted South Carolina's loophole-ridden campaign finance system that allows lawmakers to profit from public office and use their campaign war chests like personal ATMs.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL REPORTING**

Neela Banerjee, John H. Cushman, Jr., David Hasemyer and Lisa Song of InsideClimate News receive the Scripps Howard Award for Environmental Reporting and \$10,000 for "Exxon: The Road Not Taken," an examination of Exxon's engagement with climate change over four decades. It found that as early as 1977, Exxon scientists warned top executives that the buildup of carbon dioxide from burning fossil fuels was warming the planet, posing risks to people throughout the world and threatening the company's core business.

**JUDGES' COMMENTS:** "For the past 20 years Exxon has worked to discredit climate science. But, as we learn from InsideClimate News' compelling series, the company had evidence suggesting the opposite was true. From its own scientists. For years."

Finalists: MSNBC Longform and Peg Leg Films for "Just Eat It," an investigation into the issue of food waste from farm, through retail, all the way to the back of the reporters' own refrigerator; also, Patricia Callahan of the Chicago Tribune for "Chemical Harvest," which examined the increased use of a World War II-era herbicide linked to cancer and other health problems.

### **BUSINESS/ECONOMICS REPORTING**

The staff of The Wall Street Journal receives the William Brewster Styles Award for Business/Economics Reporting and \$10,000 for "Private Risk," a series that revealed how technology firms fudge their finances, how private tech shares are traded in a shadowy market, and how millions of Americans own risky shares of private tech firms through their retirement funds with no idea about what they're actually worth.

**JUDGES' COMMENTS:** "This yearlong series is masterfully researched and reported, rich with revealing anecdotes and granular detail. Going deep inside the world of technology and finance, the series documents in clear prose and insightful graphics the connection among Wall Street, Silicon Valley and Main Street. At stake are the retirement funds — and sometimes personal wealth — of millions of Americans whose mutual funds are invested in these startup tech companies. True valuations and real prospects are nearly impossible to discern, the series shows. These stories resulted in action by the government and major retailers. And they provided, most importantly, relevant education for investors and consumers."

Finalists: Mike Baker of The Seattle Times, Daniel Wagner of the Center for Public Integrity/BuzzFeed News for "The Mobile Home Trap," an investigation into how unsuspecting buyers are locked into high-interest loans for rapidly depreciating dwellings; also, Paul Ford of Bloomberg Businessweek for "Code: An Essay," which explains what code is, what its future looks like, and demystifies the culture, quirks and tools of the 18 million people around the world who create it.

### **OPINION**

Nancy Kaffer of the Detroit Free Press receives the Walker Stone Award for Opinion Writing and \$10,000 for her body of work, particularly on the Flint water crisis, which represents dogged reporting and deep sourcing in commentary that seeks justice for Flint residents.

**JUDGES' COMMENTS:** "Nancy Kaffer combines grace of writing with excellent reporting. She is a powerful voice for those who were failed by the government repeatedly — rape victims, women, the people of Flint and tenants facing eviction. She chose her topics wisely to hold government officials accountable and empowered those with too little say."

Finalists: Tim Swarens and Suzette Hackney of The Indianapolis Star for "Campaign for LGBT rights in Indiana," editorials that fought for civil rights protections for LGBT citizens; also, Farah Stockman of The Boston Globe for a selection of columns.

## PHOTOJOURNALISM

Carolyn Cole of The Los Angeles Times receives the Scripps Howard Award for Photojournalism and \$10,000 for her portfolio which helped put a human face to many of the important stories of 2015, including Europe's migrant crisis, the Paris terrorist attacks, and Cuba's wait for change.

**JUDGES' COMMENTS:** "Carolyn's work was really outstanding. It was extremely poignant and emotional, largely because four of the more prominent stories of the year were a part of her portfolio. In each instance she provided a very raw and compelling visual narrative that was enlightening and emotional."

Finalists: Daniel Berehulak of The New York Times was recognized for his portfolio, which included news and feature coverage of the 2015 Earthquake in Nepal and features in Antarctica and Mexico; also, Jessica Rinaldi of The Boston Globe for "A Side of New England Often Unseen," which included images of heroin addiction in Boston and poverty in rural Maine.

## TOPIC OF THE YEAR

Rachel Aviv of The New Yorker receives the Scripps Howard Award and \$10,000 for Topic of the Year with "Your Son is Deceased," an investigation of the police department in Albuquerque, New Mexico, which has one of the highest rates of fatal shootings by police in the country.

**JUDGES' COMMENTS:** "If you want to understand the problem in police and community relations, read this story. The New Yorker entry, "Your Son is Deceased" uniquely accomplished the task of telling the story of a systematic and tragic breakdown in relations between a community and its police department. Through one incident, this story showed the gap between the culture of law enforcement and the culture of the people in the community. But it also showed that a breakdown in trust had been years in the making and involved layers of leadership. The storytelling and reporting offered a nuanced, personal approach to the topic of the year unlike any others.

## ADMINISTRATOR OF THE YEAR

Michael Bugeja of Iowa State University receives the Charles E. Scripps Journalism and Mass Communication Administrator of the Year Award and \$10,000.

## TEACHER OF THE YEAR

Carolina Acosta-Alzuru of the University of Georgia receives the Charles E. Scripps Journalism and Mass Communication Teacher of the Year Award and \$10,000.

## ABOUT THE FOUNDATION

Dedicated to excellence in journalism, the Scripps Howard Foundation ([www.scripps.com/foundation](http://www.scripps.com/foundation)) educates, empowers and honors extraordinary journalists who illuminate community issues, and partners with impactful organizations to drive change and improve lives. As the philanthropic arm of The E.W. Scripps Company, the Foundation is a leader in industry efforts in journalism education, scholarships, internships, minority recruitment and development, literacy and First Amendment causes. With a special commitment to the regions where Scripps does business, the Foundation helps build thriving communities.

### **ABOUT SCRIPPS**

The E.W. Scripps Company (NYSE: SSP) serves audiences and businesses through a growing portfolio of television, radio and digital media brands. Scripps is one of the nation's largest independent TV station owners, with 33 television stations in 24 markets and a reach of nearly one in five U.S. households. It also owns 34 radio stations in eight markets. Scripps also runs an expanding collection of local and national digital journalism and information businesses, including podcast industry leader Midroll Media and over-the-top video news service Newsy. Scripps also produces television shows including "THE LIST" and "The Now," runs an award-winning investigative reporting newsroom in Washington, D.C., and serves as the long-time steward of the nation's largest, most successful and longest-running educational program, the Scripps National Spelling Bee. Founded in 1878, Scripps has held for decades to the motto, "Give light and the people will find their own way."

### **Contact:**

*Battinto Batts, Scripps Howard Foundation, [battinto.batts@scripps.com](mailto:battinto.batts@scripps.com), 513-977-3030*